



News from

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[Chicago, IL] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski gave the following opening statement at the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit's field hearing held in Chicago. The field hearing, entitled, "Chicagoland Transportation Needs for the 2016 Olympic Bid," was requested by Rep. Lipinski to bring attention to Chicago's transportation needs in light of the 2016 Olympic bid as well as the upcoming 2009 federal transportation reauthorization bill. This reauthorization is expected to authorize billions of dollars in transportation funding.

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Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Duncan, thank you for responding to my request and coming out to my hometown of Chicago to hold this subcommittee hearing, highlighting the transportation needs of the Chicago area for the 2016 Olympics and beyond.

I'd also like to thank all of our witnesses for your participation and input in this hearing.

I know there were a number of individuals and organizations that wished to participate in today's proceedings but were unable to due to time constraints.

The 2016 Olympics bid is a great opportunity for Chicagoland. All of us who live here know Chicago is the greatest city in the world. The Olympics would be our chance to showcase our region to more than 2 million visitors and to over 4 billion TV viewers around the world. But this bid is not just about Chicagoland. It is crucial to remember that Chicago's bid is America's bid. That is why I asked Chairman DeFazio to bring the subcommittee here.

Hosting the Olympics creates a dramatic short-term surge in demand for transportation. During the 1996 Olympics, the last Summer Games held in the U.S., Atlanta hosted over 2 million visitors. Fortunately, Chicago already has a world-class transportation system. We sit at the crossroads of the country for planes, trains, and automobiles. Chicago is home to two of our nation's busiest airports, O'Hare and Midway, with O'Hare the second busiest airport in the world. Chicago is perhaps the most important rail hub in the world, and over 2.5 million passengers pass through Amtrak's Chicago hub each year.

Metropolitan Chicago also has 25,000 miles of roads including 485 miles of freeways. Nine interstate highways run through Chicago and its suburbs. The CTA, Metra, and PACE provide extensive public transportation service throughout metropolitan Chicago, including over 2 million rides each weekday. And Chicago has extensive bike and walking paths.

Chicago's extensive infrastructure and transportation capabilities mean that we are already well suited to host

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the Olympics. In fact, the transportation system was one of Chicago's strongest points for the U.S. Olympic Committee. However, there is always a need to continue investing and improving the system. And not only for the additional transportation demands of an Olympics; even without the Olympics, the transportation demands will increase as the region's population is expected to grow by 1 million residents in the next 20 years. Right now our committee is beginning to discuss the next highway funding bill which – I hope – will provide a half trillion dollars for transportation in 2009. Chicago must have continued strong federal support for transportation, and I will work with Chairman DeFazio and others to make sure we are once again successful in securing the needed funding for the future of our region.

To accommodate this growth, there are substantial projects already underway. For example, the Federal Government, state of Illinois, the City of Chicago, Metra, and the nation's freight railroads have partnered in the \$1.5 billion CREATE project which will modernize Chicagoland's antiquated rail system. CREATE will improve passenger rail service, decrease congestion on roads, and keep Chicago the vital rail hub it now is. The O'Hare Modernization Project is another critical transportation improvement that is currently taking place. And there are many other road, rail, and public transit projects planned or underway to make our world-class transportation system even better, including energy efficiency projects intended to improve upon Chicago's green reputation. I am sure a Chicago Olympics will be the most environmentally friendly Olympics yet.

To keep Chicago the "city that works," vision and planning are necessary. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on their visions and plans for transportation for the 2016 Olympics and beyond.

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